

A
TREATISE
ON
CHURCH-GOVERNMENT,

In Three PARTS :

B E I N G,

- I. A NARRATIVE of the late Troubles and Transactions
in the CHURCH in *Bolton*, in the *Massachusetts*.
- II. Some REMARKS on Mr. *Adams's* SERMON, preached
there *August 26, 1772*. With an Appendix, being some
Remarks on an Account in the *BOSTON EVENING-POST*,
December 28, 1772, of the Dismission of a Minister at
Grafton.
- III. On COUNCILS, their Business, Authority and Use.
With an ESSAY on Ministers negating the VOTES of
the CHURCH, and shewing where the KEYS of the
Church are.

By a NEIGHBOUR. L

*But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he
was : and when he saw him, he had Compassion on him.
And went to him, and bound up his Wounds, pouring in
Oyl and Wine.*

LUKE X. 33. 34.

B O S T O N :

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A

T R E A T I S E

O N

CHURCH-GOVERNMENT.

AS I was on a Journey I lit on a Book intituled, Mr. *Adams's Sermon on Christian Unity*. As this was a subject I take great Satisfaction in, I read it, when I came toward the Close of the Sermon, I found he told there were some great Things going forward in the Town where he delivered his Sermon, as though it threatened the whole *Christian Order* and Constitution; this made me curious to know, where those Terrible Things were going forward; which he intimated were so threatening. By turning to the Title Page, I found he said, it was preached in BOLTON in NEW-ENGLAND: but this did not determine whether it was BOLTON in CONNECTICUT, or in the MASSACHUSETTS: However, by Report it appeared that it was Bolton in the *Massachusetts*. Whereupon I enquired into the State of that Town, and what the *Controversy* was, which Mr. *Adams* said was *risen to so great height*; and according to the best information I could get, it was in brief as follows.—There had for some Time prevailed a Report,

in Town and out, that the Minister of that Town, had in sundry Instances appeared as if he were overcome with Spirituous Liquor ; and some appearances in Time of public Worship-were such, as gave a general Suspicion to the Congregation, that this was the Case ; and particularly in the Afternoon, Sacrament-Day. Upon which the Church tho't they could no longer neglect treating with him upon it, which when they did, he declared that he never had drank to that degree, so as in any Way to affect or hurt his Reason, Speech or Limbs. The Church being disposed to put the most charitable and favourable Construction possible upon his Conduct, voted to accept of this Declaration for a Settlement of the Affair, upon Condition he would read it off publickly to the Congregation the next Lord's Day ; and lodge a Copy of it with the eldest Deacon. But instead of reading it distinctly, as was expected ; he read it intermixed with his Sermon, so that many of the Congregation, did not understand that he had read it at all ; and enquired why he had not done as he had promised. Hence the Difficulty continued and revived, and other Instances of Intemperance complained of, beside that on Sacrament-Day, till they called in a Council ; before whom he for a while, continued his Declaration of Innocency, till at length on a sudden, out comes a full Confession, of having been guilty of Intemperance in sundry Instances. When this was proposed to the Church for their Acceptance, they said they could not put this and his former Declaration together ; and therefore could not accept of it as satisfactory.

However, after some Discourse it obtained a Vote of the Majority of the Brethren. But how it obtained I never could conceive, only as the People were very candid, tender of him, and disposed to take up with any thing rather than to continue a Difficulty ; for the main Thing, that I understand was urged to reconcile those two Things, was that this Confession, was no more than he had done before, the Brethren not having said old Declaration at that time to compare.

However, some remaining dissatisfied : said old Declaration was afterward had and compared. Whereupon the dissatisfaction was continued and increased ; for now, not only did it appear that they were far from agreeing : but it was complained, that said old Declaration as it was left with the Deacon was a false Copy. And Mr. Goss said he knew it was a false one, when he left it, that he told the Deacon so. The Deacon denied that he did tell him so ; or that he in the least mistrusted it, from any thing he said. The Deacon was an old Man, and not mistrusting any thing, never read it. These Difficulties were agreed to be referred to a Committee

mutually chosen of the Brethren of the Church. After the Aggrieved had finished their Evidence and Pleas, Mr. Goss says he has some Allegations to lay in against the Complainants, viz. That they were guilty of Blasphemy, or Things bordering upon it. He was asked whether he had taken the previous Christian Steps with them? He said he had. He was then asked why he had not brought it forward before? He answered, because he knew not of them till to-Day, and chiefly this Afternoon.

This broke up the proposed Settlement by said Committee. Hence another Council was called, and said Matter of Grievance laid before them. At which also new Matters of Grievance appeared, viz. a Charge against Mr. Goss of shewing a Paper to the former Council, which he had promised he would not, and that said Paper as he had shewn it was erroneous. This Complaint, the present Council utterly refused to take under Consideration, notwithstanding repeated Importunity. Hence the Result of this Council was not accepted by the Church. It was motioned and urged by some of the Brethren to endeavour an accommodation in the Church. Mr. Goss for some time neglected to call a Church-Meeting for that Purpose. At length he called a Meeting to see if they would accept the Result of the last Council; at which the Affair of said Paper was called in Question. The Complainant said it was not settled; nor was he prepared for a Hearing, viz. because Mr. Goss had promised him a Copy of said Paper; but had not yet done it. Mr. Goss was asked why he had not fulfilled said Promise? He denied that he had so promised. The Complainant immediately in the presence of the Church proved that Mr. Goss had so promised. Then Mr. Goss said he had altered his Purpose. He was asked if he had a *dispensing Power with his Promises*? He answered he had. Some discourse intervened to this Purpose, that a good man though he had promised to his Hurt would perform. And then the Question was again put, *Let me understand you Mr. Goss, is that really your Principle, that you have a Right to dispense with your Promises so made to a Brother?* He answered, *it was*. Upon some very great dissatisfaction at this, appearing in one especially that had always stood for him, and some further Discourse, Mr. Goss said he did not mean, practice, nor teach so, *it was Inadvertance*, and renewedly promised to give said Copy, and agreed to be tried by the Church as to the Matters of Grievance against him. The Meeting was adjourned, said Copy was given. At the Adjournment a number of Aggrievances were brought in against Mr. Goss,

as appears by an attested Copy under Mr. Goss's Hand. He tried *first* whether they would consider the first Complaint? Pass'd affirmatively, but objected against by the Pastor. *Secondly*, Whether the Church judged the first Article proved? Answered affirmatively, but objected against by the Pastor. Here it is worthy to be observed, That he had at a former Meeting agreed, that these Aggrievances should be tried by the Church. Now he negatives them upon the same Head, and goes on directly to trying that which he had negated, and according to his own Notion had made void. At several Adjournments some of said Articles were acted upon by the Church. At length, before they had gone through the Business, Mr. Goss dissolved the Church Meeting *pro arbitrio*, contrary to the Mind of the Church. Soon after a Number of the Brethren apply to him to call a Church Meeting in order to send out for a Council. Mr. Goss refuses, unless they would be bound to abide by the Result. Upon which they send to three Neighbouring Churches to come and assist them. Two of which came by their Delegates. They advised Mr. Goss to join in calling in a Council in common Form. But he refused. And then brought out that he had negated all the Votes of the Church, relative to that Affair. Upon which some of the Brethren apply to him for a Copy of the Votes of said Meetings. When they came to have said Copy, they find sundry Votes there attested to be passed and negated by the Pastor, which never were passed by the Church; as appeared, not only by the Memory of the Church; but by Minutes kept by several in the Time of the Meetings.

They then sent out for a Council of *five* Churches, who came; by whose Perswasion, Mr. Goss agreed to send out for a mutual Council according to common Form. Who were accordingly sent for, and come *June 11, 1771*. This Result is very lengthy: but there seems to be no Light held forth in it. And indeed it seems the Council had no Light in themselves; for in near or quite every Article, they say it don't *appear*, or is not *supported*, notwithstanding it is affirmed, that to many or most of those Articles there were sundry substantial Witnesses testified to them before the Council. And in some Articles it is asserted that the Council openly and absolutely refused to admit Evidence presented to them by Members of the Church and Inhabitants of the Town, under a Notion of their being Parties in the Case. The most favourable Construction I can think of, to put upon such Conduct, is to compare it with Children, whom I have seen some Times at their Play, shut their Eyes fast, and say they can't

see each other, when they are plain before them in DayLight. But I shall in the third Part of this Work shew that it is something worse than Children's Play. The Church say *they cannot act like rational Creatures: much less like Christians to accept of it.* The Church having for some time considered Mr. Goss as having abdicated his Office, viz. ever since he dissolved the Church Meeting, and refused to call one again upon the Request of a number of the Brethren. They desired two of the Brethren to warn every Brother of the Church to meet at the Meeting-House 22d of July, 1771. Which they, the said Brethren accordingly did, and the Meeting was attended; when they chose a Moderator and Clerk, and made the following Proposal to Mr. Goss, viz. Considering the Difficulties subsisting, notwithstanding all the Endeavors they had used for an Accommodation; they proposed, that if he would take a Dismission, they would (with the Concurrence of the Town) leave the Matter of his Conduct, respecting his Support, to the General Sessions of the Peace, to determine whether any Part or the Whole of said Contract should be paid him; all to be done without any Cost to him. But he refused to comply with said Proposal. Then they desired him to make some Proposal to them. And then the Meeting was adjourned to the 5th Day of August then next ensuing. But he made no Proposal to them. When they met again they proposed to proceed to consider and act upon his Dismission; or consider what was best to be done on the next Thursday, to which Time they adjourned, and informed him that if he see fit, he might attend. At which Time they again met, and after a Preamble setting forth the State of Affairs among them, they by Vote declare, that he is discharged from his Offices as Pastor and Teacher in that Church, and all the Power by them committed to him entirely reversed. The same was also concurred by the Town in a legal Town-Meeting assembled for that Purpose. Since which the neighbouring Ministers have stood aloof from said People, endeavoured to prevent their having the Gospel preached to them; or enjoying common Communion Privileges Abroad; and refuse to take any Christian or Constitutional Measures to convince them of any error. And Mr. Adams's Sermon appeared to be designed to carry on the same Scheme; to which therefore I now proceed.

I come now to make some Remarks on Mr. Adams's Sermon; which indeed by the general run of it, one would be led to suppose, was delivered to the Body of the People in the Town; or at least, if it was to a Minor Part of the People, to persuade them to re-unite with the Body; for every one

knows, that for Minor Parties to set up by themselves, in Separation from the Body, is the direct Way to crumble Bodies to Pieces, which certainly is directly contrary not only to *Christian Unity* ; but to all social Existence. But it seems, not only by common Report : but by his own Words, that it was to a small Party of the Town, vid. Page 42. " Your Numbers not very large." And the drift of it is, to have them continue and persist in their Separation. I shall not make all the Remarks upon his Sermon, which appear to me might be made ; lest I should tire the Reader with prolixity. I shall therefore omit making any particular Remarks till I come to the 30th Page ; where he tells about *Constituted Judges* between Ministers and People. *The People are not suitable*, he says, *because they are a Party concerned*. This to me sounds very much of the Prudence and ingenuity of his *Holiness* ; who as I have understood, rose to his present Pitch of Infalibility ; by first very speciously proposing that the People were not fit to be Judges ; who were proper for Bishops ; that it would be more safe to be in the Hands of the Clergy, &c. But it seems he had wholly lost Sight of our Constitution ; which according to Scripture, Platform, and many other Writers, makes the Church the sole Judicature in all Ecclesiastical Causes ; which I shall take occasion further to consider in the last Part of this Work. But it seems he had not only lost Sight of the Constitution ; but even of common Sense. The Church in trying and judging such Causes, as are properly Ecclesiastical ; are not judging their own Cause : but the Cause of Christ. If any Brother in the Church should be drunk every Day, commit Fornication, Swear, profane the Sabbath, or any other such Immoralities that may be enumerated ; it does not affect my Person or Property ; i. e. it does not wound my Flesh, or good Name, nor take one Farthing from my Estate : neither in my judging of him in the Church ; and condemning him as guilty ; and giving my Voice or Vote in his Censure ; put one Penny into my own Pocket. If the Church were to lay a Fine upon an offending Brother for his Faults, and that Fine were to go into the Church Treasury, to defray necessary Charges ; then they would be interested Persons, in their Ecclesiastical Causes : Hence common Sense shews, that what constitutes interested Persons, in any Cause, is their winning or losing something in their Persons or Property, by the issue of the Cause. But a Church cannot be supposed to save one Penny by finding any Brother, and especially a Minister, guilty ; for though by their finding him so grossly guilty, as that they can no longer retain him, as their Pastor ; yet this does not

save them the Cost of supporting the Gospel : but rather increases their Charge, on that Account ; so that really, if any Way, they are interested to judge in the Minister's Favour. But it seems Mr. *Adams* not only lost Sight of the Constitution and common Sense, but by turning over a Leaf, forgot himself. For after he had in the 30th and 31st Pages, been very abundant, in saying that the People were unfit to be Judges ; that there must be some constituted ; and that these must be an Ecclesiastical Council, to judge and determine. Turn over to the 32d Page, and there he says that " Ecclesiastical Councils are only advisory ; and that they can be nothing else." But he says " it does not hence follow as some would have it,---that we are at liberty to admit or discard them, according as they agree or disagree with our own corrupt Wills and Tempers."

Who it is (as he tells of) that *would have it*, that they are at liberty, to act according to their own corrupt Wills and Tempers, against Advice or according to Advice, or even if they had no Advice in the Case, I must confess myself at a Loss ; unless he spake for himself, what he *would have*. The People he would be thought to aim at, I am persuaded would not one of them, pretend or allow, that they *would have* any such thing, as that they had any Liberty to act according to their own corrupt Wills and Tempers, in any Case, or under any Circumstances whatever. The same might be observed, on what he says in the next, viz. 33d Page, about the best Advice, and the most consentaneous to Reason and Scripture, and the Result of Councils ever so Rational, being disregarded and rejected ; I presume none of those he aimed at, will allow " that they hold " to any such Thing. And therefore he must take it to himself, since he has ventured to affirm there are such Opinions held to. In the beginning of the next, viz. 34th Page, Mr. *Adams* undertakes to quote something out of the Platform, but he had the unhappiness, to miss an essential Part of the Sect. he pretended to transcribe, viz. Chap. XVI. Sect. 5. I need not transcribe the whole Sect. ; every one ought to have the Platform, to turn to ; I shall observe, that the sense of that Sect. as it stands in the Platform is, that the principal Ground of the Reverence and Submission, due to the Results of Councils, is their agreeing with the Word of God ; without which they bind not at all. Now this of their not binding at all, without that Agreement, is omitted in Mr. *Adams's* Sermon ; hence then according to the Section Mr. *Adams* himself, has pretended to quote ; if a Result of a

Council, don't appear to agree with the Word of God, there is no binding Force in it at all, and therefore, the People he is endeavoring to fling so much Blame upon, are entirely exculpated, for their not going according to the Result of the Council, whose *Conduct* in their Reasons for not accepting the Result, they declare to be *above their Comprehension*; and that they *have Reason to believe the Council fallible*. Hence the Result did not appear to be according to the Word of God, and therefore had no binding Force at all in it. I need not say any more upon this Page, having shewn that his Premises are False; his Conclusion is no doubt False too. In the beginning of the next, viz. 35th Page; he has another clause out of the Platform which he takes from Chap. X. Sect. 6. In this quotation, though he has transcribed the Words right; yet I apprehend he has wrested the meaning of them, in what he says upon them; for where the Platform speaks of the Church having Power, according to *Order*, to remove an offending Elder from Office: This Word *Order* he improves, as if it were to mean, a Mandate from the Council; as some Authority Superior to the Church; for he says, *this Order must be the Council of other Churches where it may be had directing thereto*. But as Mr. Adams himself anon says, in all Writings, one Passage must be explained by another; and the latter must always controul, interpret and determine, the meaning of the former; So this must be determined by that Section, we have above considered; which is several Chapters after this, viz. the XVIth, and this but the Xth; & especially, that ought to controul the meaning of this Passage, as to what is said about Councils; since that Chapter is altogether, upon the Head of Councils or Synods: and indeed the whole Scheme of the Platform appears to be very contrary to the setting up Councils, as having any mandatory Authority over Churches; yea, and Mr. Adams himself as before hinted; says that Councils are, and can be nothing else only advisory; hence then according to the Platform, and Mr. Adams's own declared Opinion, he has made a wrong Construction upon this Passage in the Xth Chap. And I rather think that what was meant, by the Church having Power according to *Order*, to dismiss from Office, was to keep up the same Idea or Notion, that is expressed in Chap. VIII. Sect. 7; saying, that "if the Church have Power to choose their Officers and Ministers; then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have Power also to depose them; for to open and shut, to choose and refuse &c. are Acts belonging to the same Power," which shews

that their Notion of *Order* was a *Fitness*, *Propriety*, and *Consistency* in any thing to be done. So when they had expressed their Sense or Notion of *Order* or *Fitness*, as in the above quoted Sect. VIIIth Chapter, and again to the same Effect in this Xth Chapter, saying, that "it being natural to all Bodies, and so unto a Church Body, to be furnished with sufficient Power for its own Preservation:" And as they had said in the Vth Chapter, *that even the Power of Office is in the Church, in that they design the Persons unto Office.*---- When they had expressed all these Things of *Order*, or the Nature of a Church; when they come to mention the Affair of removing an Officer from his Office; they say, that according to *Order*, they that had Power to call to Office, have Power to remove him from his Office; and this *Order* or *Fitness*, they had repeatedly and abundantly expressed in these foregoing Passages I have mentioned; and instead of repeating all these Principles over again in this Place, they sum them up in this one general Term *Order*; and say according to that the Church has such a Power; as is very common with some now a days, to say according to the *Nature of Things*; meaning do doubt, the same Things as the Compilers of the Platform did by saying *according to Order*, as they do in this Place. And it appears to me as great a Violence to Words, to construe them as Mr. Adams does in this Place; as if one should say, that every Creature has a Power of Self-Preservation, and that a Man according to this Principle has Power, when he is informed of an Enemy, to use Means to secure himself: And Mr. Adams should argue thus upon it, that the Man's Power so to preserve himself, consisted in his being informed or directed to take Care of himself. But if I see an Enemy and nobody else sees; must I therefore stand still and be killed, and not exercise this Power of Self-Preservation? Why no says Mr. Adams; if you do run at all, it must be according to *Order*: You must have *Orders* from some of your Neighbours to run, before you stir, or it will be no Escape at all. Indeed if there be no body to tell me to Escape, then he allows that I have a Power to Escape without this *Order* or *Mandate*, as he seems to consider it. The Question is, Where the Power of Preservation, and in the Case before us, where the Power of dismissing from Office lies; and that, according to the Platform, if there be any meaning to Words, is in the Church; as abundantly appears from what has been said; and what might farther be said if there was need of it; and especially if we only consider, that the Platform holds forth, that the Power of Office is in the Church; that the Power of Self-Preservation is pa-

tural or essential to the Being of Churches : And in another Place, that Councils or Synods are not absolutely necessary to the Being of Churches. This shews that the Platform has no Notion of the Results of Councils putting a validity upon the Acts of the Church : but on the contrary, that the Platform shews that the Acts of the Church may put a validity upon the Results of Councils ; as is very plain to be seen in sundry Places ; and indeed seems to be the whole drift of the Platform, wherever Councils or Synods are mentioned.— As to what Mr. *Adams* says in the remainder of this 35th Page about a People dismissing a Minister contrary to the repeated Advice of Councils, where it cannot be pretended that he offends incorrigibly, enquiring what we shall think of a People that do so, &c. ? I am content he should think of it as he pleases, since it is well known, it is nothing to the Case of *Bolton*, which he set himself to animadvert upon ; for it is very manifest, that they abundantly pretend, that their Elder offended incorrigibly, as appears by the foregoing Narrative.—In the next, viz. 36th Page, Mr. *Adams* undertakes farther to illustrate and confirm what he has said against the Power of People to dismiss their Minister without the Advice of Council, by referring to the last Section of the Xth Chapter, where the Platform speaks of *an organic Church and right Administration, that no Church Act can be consummated or perfected without the Consent of both*. Now how this can prove or argue any thing for what he has said about Councils, appears to me mysterious ; for according to his Construction of this Passage, if they had ever so many Councils, and advised to the dismissal of the Minister ; yet if he should please not to consent to it, it would all be to no Purpose. But his Construction of this Section appears to be a very great Violence to the general Sense of the Platform : for every one that has at all acquainted himself with that Book, must know, that the Notion of an organic Church, according to that, is one that has ruling Elders, distinct from the Minister ; and all along in this same Chapter speaks of the Church as having a plurality of Elders. But Mr. *Adams* says this *Both* spoken of in the Platform, is Ministers and People ; when it is plain to any one that will read it, that the Platform means Elders and Brotherhood. For fear of being too lengthy, I shall omit saying all upon this Place, that I think it might deserve ; yet I can't pass it over without remarking one Thing more. In this Place Mr. *Adams* says, with a wonderful Air of Assurance, “ How absurd is it to pretend that the Compilers of this Book meant to give the People a Power to dismiss their Pastors, when it ex-

“ pressly says, that no Church Act can be valid, or perfect without the Consent of both, that is, Minister and People.” And in the preceeding Page he had said, that if a Church was troubled with an incorrigibly offending Elder, and they could procure no Council to judge upon the Matter; whether by his refusing to join with them, or otherwise the Platform and common Sense will justify them in dismissing him: but now unless he joins with them the Platform can’t justify them in any Act they shall pretend to do. How absurd then, has he in this Page called what he said in the preceeding Page! This is the second Time we have found Mr. Adams forgetting himself, or loosing Sight of his own Words by turning over a Leaf. I proceed to make some Remarks upon what he says in the 37th Page, where he speaks of the Churches pretending to dismiss their Elders, contrary to what he had been holding forth, as a *new and upstart Practice*, which he says is such an one, as *justly alarms, especially as the Authors of it endeavor to make other Churches put a Sanction on their Conduct, &c.* How other Churches voting Charity with a certain Church, is a putting a Sanction upon what they have done; is not perhaps very easy for every one to see; neither do I see any need that one Church has to put a Sanction upon the Acts of another. I know there is need of Churches putting a Sanction upon the Results of Councils, to make them of any avail, viz. Platform Chapter XV. Section 2; and no doubt the Messengers of Churches whenever they have been to any Council, ought to make return of what they have done to their Churches that sent them, in Order for their Approbation; and it ought not to be considered as the Advice of those Sister Churches, till the respective Churches have approved of it; and if the respective Churches do not approve of the Result, the Church which it most especially concerns, cannot with any Propriety be considered as going contrary to her Sister Churches, or breaking Fellowship with them in any Sense or Degree, till those Sister Churches have approved of what that particular Church has rejected; and this, viz. the keeping up and maintaing the Communion and Fellowship of Churches appears to be one great and special Thing in view, in the having the Advice of Sister Churches, viz. Platform Chapter VIII. Section 8. But more of the End, Design, and Consequence of Councils in the last Part of this Work. To return to what I was upon, Mr. Adams seems in this Place greatly to blame *Bolton*, for applying to Sister Churches to know whether they were in Charity with them, and this appears the same, as to blame them for not turning absolute

Independents. I suppose that *Bolton Church* never would have had it come into their Thoughts, to have gone to try the Vote of neighbour Churches in that Affair, if the Ministers had not set up an *Independency* with that Church, and had entered into a written Combination to that Purpose, as was generally reported : and some of *Bolton Church* upon Application to them for the common Privilege of the Communion of Churches were absolutely refused, which confirmed the Scheme of *Independency* among the Ministers. *Bolton People* that were so rejected by the neighbouring Ministers, desired them to deal with them in the 3d Way of Communion, but they would not do that. What should *Bolton Church* do, the Ministers round had become absolute *Independents*, they would neither admit *Bolton Church* to Privileges ; nor use any Christian or Constitutional Measures to endeavor to convince or reclaim them, as an offending Church : It appears it was high Time for *Bolton Church* to find out whether the neighbouring Churches were as much at odds with them, or as determinate *Independents*, as their Ministers. It certainly could not be to any good Purpose, for *Bolton People* to try to mend or alter any thing among themselves, in order to be in fellowship with their Sister Churches ; when they knew nothing but they still continued in Fellowship with them ; and by altering, they might fling themselves out of Fellowship, and especially so long as they were not conscious themselves of being in an Error. If they had done any thing that was offensive, or greivous to their Sister Churches they ought to know it ; and what Way should they come at this knowledge, but by trying whether the other Churches were in Charity with them, so long as no one undertook to convince them of any thing bad ? But only the Ministers stood aloof from them, and treated them as if thy were not only not Christians ; but even in some Sense not human Creatures, viz. by endeavouring all they could to prevent their having the Gospel preached to them. So that what so greatly alarms Mr. Adams is, that *Bolton People* don't turn *Independents*, but use Measures contrary to such a Scheme. But let it be that *Bolton Church* have endeavoured to get other Churches to put a *Sanction* on their Conduct. What terrible Iniquity is there in that ? Their Conduct which is so offensive to Mr. Adams, it seems is their dismissing their Minister without the Advice of a Council, or his asking of it : is not he willing the Churches should be on equal Footing with the Ministers. I knew a Minister once, who after he had been settled a few Years, began a Dispute or Uneasiness with his People, for more Salary, and as I was told,

without a Council, or asking a Dismission of his People, at once preached a farewell Sermon to them, so dismissing himself; or rather abdicated his Office: and then got other Ministers to put a *Sanction* upon his Conduct, by putting a Recommendation of him into the public Prints. And why should a Church be thought so bad, for endeavouring to have their Neighbours put a *Sanction* upon their Conduct; when to be sure they no more than imitated that Minister in his Conduct; which Conduct, the Ministers themselves put a *Sanction* upon; and especially, when I presume Mr. *Adams* can't find in all the Platform any Thing to countenance the Conduct of that Minister; so much as he acknowledges in his 34th Page, he finds in the Platform to countenance or justify the People in dismissing their Minister.

Mr. *Adams* proceeds to say in the 37th Page,—"If Things thus go on, what will become of the Constitution of the Congregational Churches?" He answers, "It will soon be wholly subverted, &c. and Ministers will have nothing to depend upon but the fickle and inconstant Breath of Mankind!" And pray what have they now; or what did they use to have? Why truly Councils! according to Mr. *Adams*: He has all along been insisting upon this; for nothing is more plain and notorious, than that it is this new and *upstart Practice*, which don't pay so much Deference to Councils as he would have; is what he says will bring it to that, that Ministers will have nothing to depend upon but the inconstant Breath of Mankind. What does he make of Councils! Are not they Mankind? This is out-doing his *Holiness* himself; he never, as I know of, pretended that he was not of Mankind; though he pretends to be infallible. But it seems by what Mr. *Adams* has advanced, he would have it be thought, that Councils are something superior to Mankind! or else why is this mighty exclamation, of having nothing to depend upon but Mankind, by Councils being neglected, unless Councils are something superior to Mankind? Mr. *Adams* plainly makes a God of Councils, and he cries very much in the Language of Micah,—*Yea have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?* So Mr. *Adams*,—Ye have set at naught Councils, and now I have nothing to depend upon but the fickle Breath of Mankind. I can't depend upon that God who has the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, and turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth.—"Who (says Mr. *Adams*) that has common Sense and common Prudence, will ever go into the Ministry on these Terms? To have but a pitiful Subsistence while the Relation continues, and be dissolved at the Pleasure of the

"People?" Perhaps it may reflect Light upon this Passage, if we turn Tables and say, What People that have common Sense and common Prudence, will ever settle a Minister upon these Terms? To have but pitiful preaching while the Relation continues; and to have the Ministers soon after they have got their Settlement, go to contending about their Contract, or run into some scandalous Conduct, and however, go off when they please; for in Ballance to the one Instance Mr. Adams is so alarmed at, I can bring a Cloud of Instances on the other Side, where People have lost the whole Settlement they have given; for a very few Years (likely) pitiful preaching; either by the arbitrary, covetous, or corrupt *Wills and Tempers* of the Ministers.— The Instance I have mentioned above, where the Minister went off so abruptly, was no doubt at least Arbitrary.— Hear another Instance, where the Minister having a handsome Settlement, and after he had been settled three or four Years, the People had been very generous to him, and he had got in a handsome Way to live; he began to contend with them about giving of him more, and said they had not fulfilled their original Contract, withal threatening to leave them. The People, as I understand; offered to leave it to Men with him; having the Arbitration consist of half Ministers. But no; he would have a Council to put a *Sanction* upon his Conduct, which he obtained, that answered his desires as I understand, and the Parish are in great danger of being ruined by it. Hear another Instance something similar to the former, the Minister indeed had been settled some longer, he complained that they had not fulfilled their Contract, they joined with him (as I understand) in calling a Council, who judged they had fulfilled their Contract: But still he was uneasy, and left his People in *Opposition* to the Result of Council, as you may see, which is one Thing that Mr. Adams complains of in the People as being so heinous and alarming. But the Ministers don't scruple to put a *Sanction* upon his Conduct, by setting him to preaching, and that people also, as I understand are almost ruined by it. But hear another Instance: A Minister was settled with a handsome Settlement, & he was a very popular Preacher, but he traded and trafficked in Horses and Land, making considerable Adventures in new Towns, and the like, by which he lost considerable, till by the Time he had been settled about six or seven Years, he was so involved that he was cast into Prison for Debt; where he continued some Months; till he took the Benefit of the Bankrupt Act then in Being. The People to help him to live, and continue as their Minister, proposed to purchase a

small Farm near the Meeting-House, and let him live on it as a Parsonage ; together with some very handsome Subscriptions to help set him up again : But no, he would not accept of the Farm they proposed as a Parsonage unless they would give it him as his own. It was thought he had a Notion that he could get a new Settlement in some other Place if he was dismissed from them : but the People moved nothing about his Dismission, till he preached a very odd Sermon, as was thought on Purpose to start the People ; the Subject and Scheme of his Sermon (as I understand) was to set forth that *the Godly are hereafter to dwell with devouring Fire, and everlasting Burnings*. Upon which the People were very ready to dismiss him. And he obtained a Council to put a Sanction upon his Conduct, so that he stood well recommended still for the Ministry. And I verily think Councils are too apt to put a Sanction on the Conduct of Ministers. One I knew who was complained of for Things very much bordering upon Sodomy, and so much proved, that he was dismissed ; and yet the Council did not scruple so far to put a Sanction on his Conduct, that he still preaches as I understand. And if things go on so, what shall we think of Councils ? Will any People of common Sense, Prudence or Christianity, ever pretend to send for any ? And what will become of the Apostle's Direction, 1 Tim. III. ? *A Bishop must be blameless, sober, of good Behaviour, &c.* In short, he must have a good Report of them which are without, &c. Almost numberless are the Instances, too many to enumerate, wherein Ministers by gross Immorality, such as Fornication, Adultery, lascivious Carriage, Intemperance, Falshood, and such like, evidently proved, within the Compass of ten or twelve Years after their settling, whereby the People have lost all the Cost of settling. Some Towns or Parishes, near or quite ruined, discouraged, scattered, divided, torn and left (as we may say) half dead, or if not thus brought to the brink of Ruin ; yet have all the Cost and Trouble of settling over again. And are not all these Things as alarming as the one Instance Mr. Adams tells of ? if that was as really unconstitutional as he would have it be thought. And shall we therefore, as Mr. Adams on the Minister's Part, concludes that no one of common Sense or common Prudence, will enter into the Ministry : Shall we (I say) on the People's Part, conclude we will have no more Ministers ? because Things go on so. By no means ; this never will do to neglect a Duty because bad Men make a bad use of good Things. This World is a World of Tryal ; and we must guard against the

Evils of it as well as we can ; and wherein we see, that we ourselves or others have missed, endeavor to mend in the best Manner we can. Let Ministers and People understand one another, how they settle, and how they must part, if ever it should come to that extremity. Let Ministers have a fair Chance for living in the World, according to the Place they are in ; and let the People have a fair Chance in their Contract as well as the Minister ; let them know before they settle, how they are to understand the Constitution ; and let not the People be affrighted for fear they shall not be able to find Ministers to settle according to the Constitution. Notwithstanding all Mr. Adams's exclamations, there is not half the risque on the Minister's Side, that there is on the People's Side ; as Ministers generally settle in this Country. People are not apt to be fond of advancing a Thousand or Fifteen Hundred Pounds, O. T. to settle a Minister any oftener than they can't help ; they will bear with a great deal before they will turn away a Minister, and bring the Cost and Trouble of settling another upon themselves ; and when they have been at all that Cost, they no doubt ought to enjoy the Benefit of it so long as they can enjoy it ; and when they can no longer enjoy it, what Reason can there be assigned, why they should be saddled with a Burden by a Council or any set of Men whatever ? Not that I would be understood to suggest, that when a Minister is past his Labour, through Infirmary or Old Age, that the People should then set him at nought ; but still to esteem him highly in Love for his Work Sake, that he has done among them ; and to continue him some handsome Allowance, as they shall agree. But when his Conduct has been such toward them, that they can no longer have confidence in him as their Pastor ; and so they can no longer enjoy him as such ; I see no Reason why they should still be incumbered with him. *To serve one another in Love*, as Mr. Adams has it in his Title Page, is the whole Essence of all Society, Civil and Religious ; and when this Service ceases through Default, the Nerves of the social Body are cut, and the Dissolution begins ; and if these Nerves can't be healed, a Dissolution must necessarily ensue. And I am persuaded Mr. Adams can't with all his Ingenuity, make out that in the Affair he has said so much about, that the Minister served the People in Love, when he negatived their Acts as he did, dissolved the Church Meeting, dispensed with his own Promises, and many other Things as we have it in the Narrative. And it avails nothing for him to alledge that these Things were not made out to the Council ; they were so to the People, who by Nature and by Constitu-

tion are the judges of these Things, notwithstanding all he has said. There seem to be several Things more that deserve Remark : but perhaps they may be sufficiently exposed by the few Hints already made, with some Hints referring to Mr. Adams's Piece, which will necessarily fall in, in the remaining Part of the Work. I shall therefore dwell no longer on this Part of the Work.

JUST as I had finished the above Remarks ; before I had entered upon the remaining Part ; I lie on a very pompous Account in the *Boston Evening Post*, of December 28, 1772. of the Dismission of a Minister at Grafton. As to the vain shew there appeared in it, I could freely have let all pass with Neglect, if it had not carried with it, such a glaring Insult upon the Town ; as if he was dismissed by a Council, and a small Part of the Church ; in Opposition to the Mind of the Town. I should have offered something to the Public through the same Channel ; but as it would have been so long after, that it would seem to have been out of Date ; and as it appeared to be so exactly of the Nature of what I am here opposing ; I thought it would not be impertinent, to take some Notice of it here, and might well stand, for one among the Instances, where Ministers have gone off with their Settlement, to the Damage of the Town. How long indeed, that Gentleman had been settled I can't say : be that as it will, it is notorious by what is published, that he is an Expectant of further employ in the Service ; for the Piece is plainly an Advertisement of him, for an honourable Acceptance and Employ, considering he had such an *Honourable Dismission*. However I cannot look upon such a Dismission very honourable. It does not appear, that it was done by a Major Vote, even of the Church.

The Advertiser says it was " by a Major Vote of the Brethren of the Church present." Not that there was any Church Meeting notified for that Purpose ; or indeed any Church Meeting at all. And whether a Quarter of the Church were *present* does not appear ; and by the Town's not concurring, it is most probable the generality of the People did not like what was going forward ; and therefore would not honour them with their Presence ; and so perhaps there might, for Instance 7 of the Church come out of Curiosity, to see the Proceedings of the Council ; and 4 of them Vote this *Honourable Dismission*, which *with strong Reasons pressed, and with great struggles, at length he obtained. Whereupon his pastoral Relation was declared to be dissolved, in the presence of the Council.* This was no doubt, that the Council might put a *Sanction* upon it ; at least it is spoken

of with that Air, as though their Presence put a *Sanction* that would abide, maugre the Dissent of the Town. This is of the same Scheme, Mr. *Adams* is so strenuously contending for ; as if Towns and Churches were all *Non Compos Mentis*, and must have Councils for their Guardians, to make, continue, or dissolve Contracts for them. Here is a plain Pretence of a Council's dissolving the Contract of *Grafton* Inhabitants, even against their Wills. Which can be upon no other Principle, than that the Town are *Non Compos Mentis*, and the Council forsooth are their Guardians.

This is a more glaring Insult upon the Common Rights of Mankind, than the *Stamp Act* it self, or all the *Duty Acts*, so much complained of ; for any set of Men, to pretend to dissolve a Contract, between Man and Man, without the Consent of the Parties ; and thus to bring on the Town a Bill of Cost, so great as the Settlement of another Minister. It appears to me that such a Dismission can no Way be reconciled, to the common Rights of Mankind ; nor the Minister said to be so dismissed, look upon himself, discharged from his Contract with that Town ; unless he lend to the Town Money for a sufficient Settlement of another, to remain with them for that Use, so long as he is able to discharge the Work of the Ministry ; or the Town is willing to release him of his Contract. And I should think the Town had a good Right in Law for an Action of Damages against him for that Purpose. But here, lest my Antagonists should say that if a Minister can't dismiss himself, when he pleases, without violating the Rights of Mankind, unless the other Party of the Contract agree to dissolve it ; then how can the Church and Town dissolve it, unless the Minister agree to it ? To this it may be answered. It is easy to see, that the Case is widely different between the Town and the Minister, in this Affair. For the Minister in going off, while he is able to carry on the Work, puts Money into his own Pocket. But the Town by dismissing of him, bring on themselves a Bill of Cost, in the settling of another. So that the Case is altogether different, the one judging Money into one's own Pocket, the other judging of it out.

Hence the Constitution, by the Plat. as we have considered, very wisely fixed the Dismission of a Minister with the People ; who not only were to enjoy their Service : but with whom there was so great a Ballance, against judging rashly for a dissolution of the Relation. Yea if there were no Settlement to pay, as is the Case in Places where there is an adequate Parsonage ; yet the Risque, Trouble and Division,

which it generally exposes a Town or Parish to, to settle a new Minister, is a very great Ballance against their rashly or suddenly dissolving the Relation.

But the Constitution fixing it in the Power and Rights of the People, to dismiss upon Delinquency ; makes it that they are not to be considered, as one Side dissolving the Contract, since he who settles upon the Constitution, such a Dismissal is implied in the Contract, and this makes an Agreement upon his Side, that the Contract shall so be dissolved. But then, here is to be observed a distinction between dismissing for Delinquency, and for Infirmary ; for if a Minister by Infirmary, Old Age, or otherwise, should become unable to fulfill his Office ; and the People should be so unreasonable, as to dismiss him in order to get rid of a Burthen ; this would by no means be reasonable or constitutional, for this would be expressly judging Money into their own Pocket ; and there might justly be a doubt, whether such Dismissal were valid, the Constitution making no Provision for dismissing upon Infirmary : But if they conclude it to be a valid Dismissal ; yet by the Circumstances, they so judging Money into their own Purse ; they ought in Justice to leave it to indifferent Men, what Allowance they should still make him ; for it would be unjust, when a Minister had spent all his Strength, with a People in their Service, to set him at nought when he was past Labour, and afford him no Help when he most needed it. But it appears most according to Reason and the Constitution in such a Case, not to pretend to dismiss him : but for them to come to an amicable Agreement, to allow him some handsome Consideration during Life. And this I think has been the Practice so far as I have been acquainted. But in all these Things, all Rashness should be avoided, and Ministers and People both, should treat each other with Candour and Moderation. People should not dismiss their Ministers suddenly, whether it be with or without a Council ; nor Ministers think to run off, when they please ; or even if they have the Advice of a Council. For if Councils (where the leading Part are generally Ministers) may dismiss a Minister when they please ; and all be looked upon well or honourable, as it is in the Advertisement ; they have the greatest Temptation of secular Interest to do such an honourable Jobb one for another. And this leads into all Manner of Confusion and Injustice : from which may appear, how far Councils (as they are generally managed) are from being proper Judges ; as Mr. Adams tells of, Not that I am for throwing them away : But

would have them keep within their own Sphere. Which I shall now proceed to consider what it is.

I come now to speak something especially as to COUNCILS ; their *Business, Authority and Use*, as they stand in Relation to CHURCHES and the Power of Churches, in all Ecclesiastical Affairs. COUNCILS, as Things are got to in this Country among Congregational Churches, may be divided into three Sorts. viz. Party-Councils, Mutual-Councils, and Ecclesiastical-Councils. I know they all affect the Name of Ecclesiastical ; but I conceive, it is only to take away their Reproach ; for after all, they reckon their Right or Authority according as they are either *Party* or *Mutual*. But I am ready to guess, that these Notions of *Party* and *Mutual Councils* are *new and upstart Practices* (as Mr. Adams speaks of *Bolton* Affair, P. 37) which our Forefathers he speaks of, had no Idea or Notion of. I have read several ancient Books upon these Things, and I don't now recollect reading of any such thing in any ancient Writer ; to be sure I think there is no mention made of them in the Scripture or Platform, on which in Conjunction, Mr. Adams himself, says *we have founded the Order and Discipline of the Congregational Churches*. I shall therefore take it for granted, that *Party* and *Mutual-Councils* are *upstart* Things, which our Constitution knows nothing about ; and therefore we are not to seek after their Authority or Business ; and indeed if we were to enquire into what they generally assume (according to what Opportunity I have had) we should find it as much unknown to those two Fundamental Books as their Names. *Ecclesiastical Councils* then are the only Sort we have to enquire about. Which to define or describe, is when a Church sends out to Sister Churches for their Advice or Assistance in any Weighty or Important Affair. I suppose the certainest Way to find what a proper Ecclesiastical Council is, is to look into the Scriptures and to examine the original Pattern which we find in the XVth of Acts ; there it appears, the Church at *Antioch* sent to the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem* about the Question of circumcising the Gentiles ; and by their sending to the Apostles and Elders, it was communicated to the whole Church, who had a Voice in the Council, vid. 22d 23d Verses, so that an Ecclesiastical Council, is a Collection of Churches met together, to consult about religious Affairs, and to advise any particular Church or Churches in general, what they ought to do in in certain Cases. But it is not so material how these Churches come together, if they do but keep within their own proper Sphere ; and do the Business

of an Ecclesiastical Council, when they are met ; only this general Rule, that all things should be done decently and in order. The special Thing to enquire after is, what is their Business, Use and extent. The Business of a Council is in my Apprehension, very justly delineated in Platform, Chapter XVI, Section 4, which I need not repeat : It being in short to clear from the Word of God, Points of Faith, Conscience, Worship and Discipline, and to bear Witness against Male-Administration and Corruption in Doctrine or Manners in any Church, and to point out the Way to reform them : thus far the positive Part of that Section : which to me appears very agreeable to the original Pattern in Acts. The Business of Councils, namely, is to clear up and set Light before the Churches, and then Councils have no further that they ought to do : hence the negative Part of the foregoing Section. They are not to exercise Church Censures in any Way of Discipline, nor any other act of Church Authority or Jurisdiction. Here it is easy to see, how repugnant to the Platform Mr. Adams's Notion of judiciary Authority in Councils is, and also how repugnant to the Platform it is, for Councils to set up, as though they were some superior Court of Judicature ; that they won't receive Testimonies from the Church, because forsooth they say the Church are Witnesses in their own Case. The Church are the Judges, according to the Constitution ; and Councils only Advisers according to Mr. Adams himself. And I could produce a Cloud of Authorities for this, if there were any need of it : but this will appear quite needless since the Champion himself has asserted it. Hence this is not the Business of the Council, to have Facts proved to them as a Court. The Council in Acts, did not stand rumaging Evidence, about the certainty of their having been judaizing Teachers at Antioch ; nor frump Paul, Barnabas, and the others, that they were Witnesses in their own Case ; and so draw up their Result, that it was not proved, that any had been teaching of them, that they must be circumcized, &c. and so with a mighty solemn Air tell what Pleasure they had to find, that there was no Division or Dissention of Opinion in the Church at Antioch, and so advise Paul, Barnabas and the others, to go and be quiet, and be careful not to take up such Surmizes and Jealousies. If the Council at Jerusalem had done so ; in my Opinion the Result at Bolton, 11th of June, 1771, would have had an ample Pattern. But far from this. The Council at Jerusalem, took the Account as they had it of the Messengers, that came from Antioch ; and advised what to do in such a Case, as was laid be-

fore them. What was it to them, whether the Facts were proved against the Parties : they were not about to lay under Censure either Part ; but to advise what was right to be done in the Case, as the Church had sent it to them. The Church at *Antioch*, nor any other Church, ever wanted to ask a Council as to Facts, whether there are such and such Facts, as the Church themselves are personally knowing to. Thus the Church at *Antioch* did not want to ask the Council at *Jerusalem*, whether there had been judaizing Teachers at *Antioch* ; neither did the Church at *Bolton* want to ask the Council, whether Mr. *Goss* had done certain Things, which the Church themselves were Eye and Ear Witnesses to. It would be a most shocking Affront to common Sense ; to set about any such Thing. To make this Matter familiar. Suppose I have a Piece of Ground, that has been tilled a long Time, and is become very weedy, and dog Grass has got in, that won't die, do almost what you will to it ; and I should have a mind to ask the Advice of my Neighbours, what I had best to do with it ; whether I had not better throw it down. And my Neighbours should tell me, you are a Witness in your own Case, and therefore it don't appear, or is not proved that you have such a Piece of Ground, and so we advise you to go, and improve your Ground as usual, and seek Profit from it, &c. with all that Gravity and solemnity which we find in the *June* Result. Would it not be worse than ridiculous ? I did not want to have my Neighbours to come, to tell whether I had such a Piece of Ground, but to advise what was best to do, with such kind of Ground. And so a Church don't want a Council to tell them whether they see one of their Brethren drunk, or hear him use profane Language, or tell Things that be not true ; tell one Story one Time, a contrary one another Time, promises Things and never fulfills his Promise. When they see or hear these Things, they know them better than a Council can tell them : but if they must have a Council to tell them these Facts, before they can properly know them to act upon ; then they must have another Council, to certify them that the first Council told them so ; and a third for the second ; and so on, *ad infinitum*. And indeed this is very much the Way that Things are managed now a Days ; one Council leads on to another ; another to a third ; a third to a fourth ; and there is no End, till the People are either destroyed, or scattered, or worried out, and give up to let every Thing go as it will ; or resolutely take up their Rights and a done with Councils. By what is laid down, of the necessary Lead and Consequence, of Councils pretending to enter into the Trial

of Matters of Fact, and act as Judicatories upon Facts, and by what appears in Fact, as Councils are generally managed, every one must see, what an endless and fruitless Labyrinth it leads into. From all which appears, that the Pattern laid down in Acts, is exactly consistent with Reason; that the Councils Business, is to advise the Church what they had best to do upon the Case; as the Church states the Facts before them. Hence another Thing to be observed, which is not so well attended to now a Days as it ought; and that is, that all Matters should have a Hearing in the Church, before they can be proper to be laid before a Council; or the Church cannot state the Facts to be advised upon; as the Church at *Antioch* disputed the Matters at Home, before they sent them to the Council at *Jerusalem*.

Having considered what the Business of Councils is, and what is not, I now come to consider what their Authority is, or wherein it consists: For which again we may see the aforesaid XVIth Chapter of the Platform, Section 5; which shews that it consists, in their Results being agreeable to the *Word of God*; without which they bind not at all. Here we have the Authority or binding Force set forth negatively and positively: From which, it is plain to see that their Authority or binding Force, does not consist in their being a Council, or in their being *Mutual* as it is called. Mr. *Adams* and many others, lay great stress upon what they call *Mutual* Councils, as though there were some special Authority at least in them; let them result almost what they will. Many Things might be said, to shew the absurdity and childishness of such a Notion: but for fear I shall be too lengthy, and considering the Scripture and Platform place the Authority and binding Force of Councils, in another Quarter, I shall take that as sufficient to stand in Opposition to Mr. *Adams's* Notion; and proceed to consider wherein the Authority or binding Force of Councils consists according to Scripture. For which Purpose, we must consider what they did, and especially their *Result*, which the Platform says must be agreeable to the Word of God, or it binds not at all. Hence see the Result of the *Jerusalem* Council, Acts XV, which begins thus, Verse 28. IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST, and to us; i. e. according to the Word of God, and human Reason; for the *Word of God* is indited by the Holy Ghost. Hence such Results as are evidently consonant with the Word of God, SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST. All Results that don't stand with that Au-

thority at their Head, are of no Authority or Obligation to be regarded ; even as any Civil Instrument that is not *in his Majesty's Name*, is of no Force. Councils have no more Right to go according to their corrupt Wills and Tempers, than the People. Hence it won't mend the Matter, for Councils to presume to preface their Results so, unless they clear up, and make it appear, that what they say is agreeable to the Word of God, and to human Reason. Thus the *Jerusalem Council* shew how it appeared, that *IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST*, to lay no such Burden as Circumcision upon the Gentiles. For first, in the 8th Ver. *Peter* declares how God bare Witness to the Gentiles, giving them the *Holy Ghost*, even as he did to the Circumcision. Then in the 12th Verse, All the Multitude attended to the Relation of like Facts, by *Barnabas* and *Paul*, declaring what Miracles God had wrought among the Gentiles, that they were knowing to. After they had related these Things, then *James* in the 14th Ver. and onward, begins to argue upon these Accounts, and compares them with the Scriptures of the Prophets ; shewing that the *Holy Ghost* thus attending the Gentiles, was agreeable to what the *Holy Ghost* had long before promised, by the Mouth of the Prophets. Then the Argument stood thus. The *Holy Ghost* having formerly promised to attend the Gentiles or the uncircumcised, and having now, as appears in several Instances in Fact attended them, or fallen upon them : Therefore the *Holy Ghost* requires no such Burden as Circumcision upon them ; for if it seemed good to the *Holy Ghost* to light upon, or attend them in Uncircumcision ; then it seemed good to the *Holy Ghost* not to lay that Burden upon them. Hence comes out the Authority of the Result, *IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST*, which all Results must have (i. e. appear exactly consonant with the Word of God, which is the same Thing as to seem good to the *Holy Ghost*) or they bind not at all. For as *Mr. Adams* himself says, they are only *Advisory* : every one knows that *Advice* has no binding Force any farther, or in any other Sense than it is enlightning and convincing to the Understanding ; and in religious Affairs, (which we are upon) shewing what is the Mind and Will of God, opening of it to the Understanding, from his Word and Works ; as the *Jerusalem Council* did, till it appears what seems good to the *HOLY GHOST*, and when a Council are influenced by the Spirit the *Jerusalem Council* were, when they have found what seems good to the *Holy Ghost*, the same will also please and seem good to them, perfectly consistent with Reason. And when it is thus enlightning

and convincing to the Understanding, that it is agreeable to the Mind of God, and to human Reason ; it will have all binding Force in it that could be wished.

THE USE OF COUNCILS.

From what has been said above ; it appears that the principal Use of them, is to investigate, find out, and demonstrate what is the Mind and Will of God ; and to convince such Churches as may be at a Loss, what their Duty is. — This appears not only by the Pattern we have in the *Jerusalem Council* : but also according to the Platform, Chapter XV. Sect. 2, also XVI. Sect. 2 and 4.

Another thing wherein we may reckon the Use of Councils, is to keep up and maintain Correspondence, Fellowship, Communion and good Understanding between Churches. Thus the Church at *Antioch* sending their Messengers to *Jerusalem*, and then the Council sending some of their own Members to *Antioch*, made a Correspond and Fellowship between them ; as well as afforded Help and Light to them. And this argues to the Sense of the Platform, Chap. VIII. Sect. 8 ; also Chap. X. Sect. 6. Hence in all important Affairs, especially such as the settling in Office, and removing from Office ; even though there should be no great doubt, if any, what is right, or agreeable to the Mind of God in the Affair ; yet it serves to keep up a Correspond and Fellowship between Churches, to call in Sister Churches, to assist and own them, in those important Transactions ; and especially in the settling a Minister, who by his Office to that particular Church, becomes an Officer in general, in some special Sense among all the Churches. And Reason teaches that a Man should in general go out at the same Door he comes in at. But in either of these Cases, if a Church can get no Help or Light from Sister Churches ; and especially in dismissing, Mr. Adams himself says, *the Platform and common Sense will justify the People in dismissing of him*. Therefore, when a People have made repeated Trials to obtain Light and Assistance from their Sister Churches, and can obtain none ; as was expressly the Case at *Bolton*, as appears by their Remarks on the Result ; then according to Mr. Adams's own Doctrine, they had a good right to dismiss him. And indeed, though in general for the keeping up Fellowship and Correspond of Churches ; it is convenient to have a Council at the Dismission of a Minister ; yet the Instances are frequent where they have been dismissed entirely without a Council. There-

fore, when Sister Churches have been repeatedly consulted with, it serves the Purpose of Correspondence of Churches ; even though they can't obtain any Light from them. Therefore, the Way is abundantly clear for a Church to proceed to dismiss him. Thus consider the Nature and Use of Councils every Way, *Bolton* People had come to the whole Nature and Design of them, according to Scripture, Platform, and Mr. *Adams*. Therefore he has no Cause to complain of them, or to inveigh against them.

But even upon the Supposition that Councils were to be considered as Judicatories of Matters of Fact ; yet to pretend to exclude the Church, or any Members of it from being Witnesses ; or to set at naught their Testimony, as it is said the *Bolton June* Council did, under a Notion of their being Witnesses in their own Case ; is turning all Law human and Divine, and all common Sense and Reason out of Doors. It may be plain to every one, that will give himself the Trouble to think of it, that in all such Cases as are purely Ecclesiastical, they are *King's Cases* ; Christ is King and Head of the Church ; and no farther than a Crime is against him as King, have Churches or Councils any Business to try them. And it is plain, Christ himself so considers them, in his Direction, Mat. 18, where he says, *if thy Brother trespass ought against thee ; — take with thee one or two, that in the Mouth of two or three, &c.* It is plain that the Original Complainant is considered by Christ as a Witness. The Reason is plain, that in such Causes as belong to the Church to try, the Complainant don't get one Farthing to himself by its going against the Person complained of. *Who made me a Judge and a Divider*, said Christ himself, and if he would not be Judge about secular Interest or Property, he never set his Body here to be Judge about them Things. But the Causes to be tried by the Church are the King Christ Jesus's Causes ; and every one (I should think) knows that in King's Cases, the Person or Persons immediately injured are good Evidences.

But again, supposing it were allowed, that Councils were a Court of Judicature ; and to try Actions of Right and Wrong, as to Civil Interest or Property ; yet the Conduct of that Council in rejecting the Church, as it is said they did, can no Way be reconciled to human Law, nor the Word of God. I suppose a general Rule in Law, for admitting Witnesses, is when the Deponent don't win or loose by the issue of the Action. And I suppose it to be as general a Rule, that when one who is Party, or considered as Party in the Case, deposes any Thing, or freely gives in any Thing, which in the issue of the Cause, subjects him to Loss ; that his own

Confession shall be taken in the strictest Sense against himself ; and it is plain enough, that in the Dismission of a Minister ; that for the Cause to issue in his Dismission, subjects the People to a Loss of their Property ; Since they must be at the Cost and Trouble of settling another. Hence their Testimony in such Case is the strongest possible.

But then again, supposing it were so that they were Gainers by his Dismission ; yet neither by the Law of God, Civil Proceedings, or common Sense, could their Evidence be so rejected. For I take it, that where the Nature of the Case is such, that no other Evidence ordinarily can be had, that of the Parties is to be admitted, as in Book Debts, Actions of Trespas, &c. where both the Plaintiff and Defendant (if I mistake not) are admitted as Witnesses in their own Case, in the strictest Sense ; so as directly to swear Money into their own Pockets : and this agrees to the Law of God. *Exod. XXII. 11. Then shall an Oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his Hand to his Neighbours Goods : and the Owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good.* There we see the Man was to give Evidence in his own Case, in the strictest Sense ; swearing Money into his own Pocket, or at least which is the same thing, swearing of it ; it being where other Evidence could not be had. So also in Wills, the Law is that no one to whom a Legacy is made may be a Witness ; and yet where a Legacy is made to a Town or Church, it has (if I mistake not) very lately been resolved by the principal Men in this Government, Gentlemen of the Law, that in such Case, Members of the Church or Inhabitants of the Town, where the Legacy is given, must be allowed as Witnesses to the Will ; because other Witnesses ordinarily cannot be had. Now Church Causes are such, as ordinarily other Evidence than those of the Church are not to be expected ; so that they properly come under this Rule. Therefore take it every Way ; and the rejecting the Church, as it is said that Council did, was repugnant to the Law of God, common Sense, and human Laws. And then it is no Wonder the People said it was above their Comprehension, as in their Remarks on the Result.

I come now to say something of the Minister having a right to **NEGATIVE THE VOTES OF THE CHURCH.** This Notion held to by the Ministers, has caused much difficulty in many Churches. Indeed where a Minister has never assumed it in his Practice, and the People have never

felt the inconveniency of it, the People will even themselves argue in favour of it. And truly where a Man holds to any thing that is not right, so long as he don't Practice upon it to do any hurt with it, it is I suppose not worth while to begin a Contention with him for his Notions or Opinions. But in as much as it has been the Bone of Contention in many Places, and is what has been of the Instruments used in wounding of *Bolton*, and *Mr. Adams* has brandished it in his Sermon like a Warrior his Sword; it seems highly necessary in this neighbourly undertaking I am upon, to pour in some healing Oyl into the Wounds that have been made by that deadly Instrument. *Mr. Adams* and others who hold to this *Negative Power* in the Minister, all pretend to take it from that Clause in the Platform: Chap. X. Section 11. I don't find as *Mr. Adams*, nor did I ever know of any one else, the most strenuous Advocate for it, ever produce one single Verse of Scripture for it; or pretend to go to that sacred Book for it's Vindication: hence then take it just as they would have it, it is an *upstart* Practice which the Scripture knows nothing about. And it is well worthy to be observed, that this is almost the only Section in the Platform that has no Quotation from Scripture to support it; so that it appears, the Compilers of the Platform themselves, did not pretend to any Scripture, to support the Notion therein advanced. However we may observe 2dly, That it must be notorious to every one that reads the Platform, that it all goes upon the Notion or Supposition of a plurality of Elders in each Church. There they find a whole long Chap. upon Ruling Elders, and every where interspersed about Elders of the Church; and especially and abundantly so in this Xth Chapter, the 3d Section speaks of the *Presbytery* of the Church, and of the Government of the Church in respect to them, resembling an *Aristocracy*, both which Terms every one knows (who has had tolerable understanding of Words) carry in them the Notion of Elders or Rulers to one Body, for if it were but only one Elder, he might properly be called a *Presbyter*, but not a *Presbytery*. And so as to the other Term, if the Government were carried on only by one Ruler, it could not be called an *Aristocracy*, but a *Monarchy*: it is so repeated, abundant and notorious that the Platform, and especially this Chapter is built upon this Notion, viz. of a plurality of Elders, or ruling Officers to each Church, that it is needless to say any thing more to make it most certain to every one that reads the Platform. Hence the saying in this 11 Sect. *That in an organick Church and right Administration it re-*

quires the Consent of both to consummate or perfect a Church-Act, can't give the least shadow or Colour of Right to what is pretended, about a single Presbyter's negating the Vote of the Church, for this would make the Government of the Church, in respect to its Minister a *Monarchy*, which is a *new and upstart Practice* unknown to the Platform, which owns no *Monarchal Power* or Ruler in the Church, but Christ himself. So that all we have in the Platform which gives the least Colour for what is pretended about negating; is where there is a Presbytery, who at first Glance, would be thought to have a Negative upon the Church by the Plat. But I rather think that there is a Mistake even in this, and that no such negating Power, as is generally supposed belongs to the Presbytery by the Platform. But before I proceed it may be proper a little to explain what we are to understand by the Minister or *Presbytery* negating the Vote of the Church. It seems to be consider'd as resembling the Legislative Body of the Nation or Province, where there are three Branches; any one of which not concurring with the other two, makes void whatever the other two may have voted; and so it becomes no Act of Parliament or Assembly. And so in the Church, especially when it has a *Presbytery*, it is supposed to consist of two Branches; either of which not concurring, makes void the Vote of the other Branch, so as that it becomes no Act of the Church. But this is evidently a false Notion, and contrary to both Scripture and Platform, to consider or compare the Church to a Legislative Body; for the Platform owns no Legislative Power belonging to the Church, but what is in Jesus Christ the Head. vid. this Xth Chapter, Section 1 and 4, with other Places to the same Purpose. Hence the Church are not by Scripture or Platform considered as a Legislative, but an Executive Body; as in the 18th of Matthew, and many other Places; and so in the Platform in numberless Places, and abundantly in this Xth Chapter, and especially in this so much boasted Section, Church Acts are called *Administration*, not *Legislation*, and it is plain to see, that to suppose or allow any such Thing as *Legislation* in the Church, and especially to have the Minister with a Negative Power at the Head of it, leads directly up to his Holiness himself. So that according to Scripture, Platform and Experience; the Church cannot be considered, as a *Legislative Body*: but an *Executive one*. Hence it appears that it is inconsistent and impracticable, to consider the Church in two Branches, one Branch having a Negative upon the other. In a Legislative Body one Branch may

propose a Thing, and Vote it, and if the other Branch of Branches do not concur with it, the Thing may cease there, and no special Inconveniences accrue, and perhaps may be better than if the Law had passed. But it is far different in an Executive Court, when any Cause is before them there must be an Issue to the Cause, it must be acted upon, it won't do to have two Branches in such a Sense having a Negative one upon the other, as that they can never come together, and so the Cause dropped out of Court because the Court can't agree. This would make horrid Work, Persons could never have the Benefit of Law and justice. So in our Executive Courts, though there seems in some Sense two Branches, viz. the Judges and the Jury, the Cause I take it, must issue finally as the Jury bring in, and the Judges must give Sentence and Execution accordingly; however it may be different from their Minds, though they have indeed right to send out a Jury once and again; yet it must finally issue as the Jury give Verdict. So in the Church, it is absolutely impracticable to pretend to consider them as two Branches, but as they are an Executive Body: If we compare them with our Executive Courts, it will very well agree with the Platform. There the Church are plainly made the Jury as in this same Section, *The Power of Judgment in Matters of Censure*. And the Presbytery resemble the Bench of Judges in the same Section, *The ordinary Power of Government belonging to the Elders*: as in a Civil Court, the Rule, Government and Presidency of the Court belongs to the Bench. And if the Elders or even a single Elder when he thought the Church made a wrong Judgment should propose to suspend the Affairs for farther Light and Consideration some reasonable Time, in imitation of the Civil Courts sending out the Jury; it is not likely any Church would be against it. But then after all, judgment must pass as the Church finally bring in; for Power of judgment lies with them, as in this boasted negativing Section it self; and the Officers in pronouncing Sentence, they must do it with the Consent of the Church, as in the 9th Section. So it is the judgment of the Church or Brotherhood, and the Sentence of the Officers, according to the judgment of the Brotherhood, and so it comes out to that, that in the consummating and perfecting the Cause, each one must do his Part, the Brotherhood theirs, and the Officers theirs; and so it is in a Court of Civil Justice, each one must do his Part, the Jury theirs, and the Bench theirs, in order to consummate, issue or finish the Cause: what then? no body as I know of, ever thought the Bench had therefore a Negative

Verdicts of the Jury. It has been before shewn, that such a Notion of Negative Branches in Executive Courts, or the Administration of Law, is repugnant and impracticable. So also it requires the Office-Act of the Minister, or some Justice of the Peace to *consummate* or *perfect* a Marriage; do the Rev. Clergy therefore conclude, that they have a Negative upon all the Matches that are made in their Towns or Parishes? They may easily see that this would Negative the Fees out of their Pockets. So also it requires the Office-Act of a Justice of the Peace to *consummate* or *perfect* a Deed, for the Conveyance of Land. Have the Justices therefore a Negative upon all the Sale of Land within their Counties? So also it requires the Office-Act of the Judge of Probate to *consummate* or *perfect* Wills. Has the Judge of Probate therefore a Negative on all the Wills in the County? Must not the Ministers in Marriages, the Justices in Deeds, the Probate in Wills *Consent* to all those Transactions that they act their Office-Part in? The Minister may think, that a Couple presented to him for Marriage, had better not Marry. A Justice may think that Men have made a foolish Bargain in a Deed brought to him to acknowledge. A Judge may think that a Man has made a very foolish unjust Will brought to him for Probating. What then? That is not their Business. Their acting their Office-Part, and thus *consenting, allowing of, yielding to, or ratifying* these supposed foolish or unjust Marriages, Bargains or Wills; don't make those Officers foolish or unjust. They don't make the Marriages, Bargains or Wills. They only Act their Office-Part in *consummating* or *perfecting* those Marriages, &c. The Folly or Injustice, if there is any, lies at the Door of those that made the Matches, &c. So in the Church: it belonging to the Brotherhood to judge, &c. If they should chance to make an erroneous Judgment; the Minister or Presbytery in doing their Office-Part, in *consummating* or *perfecting* those Votes, don't make themselves erroneous. It being the Right and Business of the Brotherhood to judge both by Scripture and Platform, makes it that it is no more necessarily the Act or Judgment of the Minister or Presbytery in their acting their Office-Part, in *consummating* or *perfecting* the Votes of the Brotherhood; than the Verdict, &c. spoken of above, are the Verdict, &c. of the Judges, &c. by their acting their Office-Part, in *consummating* or *perfecting* what is done in those respective Cases. But it is entirely different in Legislative Bodies consisting of several Branches, where, by every Branch concurring, it becomes the Special Act of Law of every

Branch. But should Mr. Adams here say, that by *Consent* is some times meant, *Accord* or *Agreement* in any Thing ; So that *Consent* in this Place must mean the Agreement of the several Branches in Legislature. Yet he himself has said, speaking of the Platform, that " in all Writings, whether Wills, Charters, or any Thing else of the like Kind, " loose and general Passages are to be explained by those " that are more definite." So that if there should happen to be dropped a loose ambiguous Word ; yet it must be explained, and controuled, by those more definite and certain. And the Platform is full and abundant enough, that no such Thing as *Legislation* belongs to the Church ; as has been before hinted. The Laws belonging to that, being all made by *Jesus Christ*. But much is said about Conscience in Church Affairs ; and that a Minister can't Act contrary to his Conscience, and therefore must have a *Negative*. Then let it be considered, that the Minister no more necessarily goes contrary to his Conscience, in acting his Office-Part in *consummating* or *perfecting* the Votes of the Church which are contrary to his Judgment ; than the Minor Part of the Church necessarily go contrary to their Conscience, in communing with the Major Part, who have made a Judgment contrary to theirs. If thus standing in their Lot, acting their Part with the Body, as they stand in Relation to it, either in the Minister or Minor Part, is going contrary to their Conscience, what shall they do ? Shall they therefore leave the Body ? Or shall the Major Part give up their Judgment to the Minor ? would not that in deed be going contrary to their Conscience ? Shall the Major Part leave the Body ? or rather shall they give up their Existence ? For they are the Body. I should think every one by this Time must see, that the Doctrine or Notion that a Minister can't act his Office-Part in *perfecting* or *consummating* the Votes or Judgment of the Church, when contrary to his Judgment ; is a Notion which in its very Nature and Consequences is absolutely inconsistent with the very Being of Society, and must necessarily root up and destroy all Church State ; it generally does prove so in Fact, wherever Ministers pretend to assume or usurp it. And will People persuade themselves that the Body of Christ of all others necessarily and inherently has that mortal Bane in it self, which must unavoidably issue in its own destruction ! No doubt the Body of Christ is most free of any from such a Bane. The Laws are, all made belonging to it. And therefore there is no need, nor possibility of admitting any Negative Branches in the Acts proper to his Body, which is his Church.

And that the Right or Power of receiving in judging, censuring, casting out, and restoring called the KEYS of the Church, so much contended about ; that these by the Laws of Christ, are committed to the Church or Brotherhood might be made abundantly manifest from a multitude of Places of Scripture ; as well as the Platform. A few of which may be hinted. *First*, what Christ says in the XVIIIth of Matthew, *Tell it to the Church : If he neglect to hear the Church.* And in the next Verse saying, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, &c.* This *Ye* meant the same Thing as if he had said whatsoever the *Church shall bind on Earth* ; for they were the *Church* that were then gathered. So that here we see, Christ plainly fixes the Right and Authority of judging and censuring, in the Church ; for if he neglect to hear the *Church* expressly determines that it is their Mind which is to be spoken and heard ; and his putting a Sanction upon their Binding and Loosing is expressly giving them the KEYS. The same might also be fairly argued from what Christ says of the KEYS in XVIth of Matthew. For altho' perhaps it may not appear so plain at the first Glance, that the KEYS were in that Place given to the Church ; yet many Things might be said shewing that, that this is the meaning of it : But what may be sufficient to my present Purpose, may be to observe, that Mr. Adams himself says, that two Passages relating to the same Thing ; the latter must always controul, interpret and determine the former : that this is certainly the Way of settling real or apparent Contradictions : that we are bound in all Reason to interpret the former in Consistency with the latter, vid. p. 36. So that according to him we are certainly bound in all Reason, to interpret that in the XVIth of Matthew, in consistency with this in the XVIIIth.

Accordingly we find the Apostles, in all their Transactions, always treating the Matter thus : Especially in their Epistles. So we find Paul to the Romans, Chap. I. Ver. 7. *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called Saints.* So then whatever he says in all the Epistle directing about Church Discipline, it is to those he had thus addressed, which was certainly all the Brotherhood, professing Believers. Accordingly he says, Chap. XVI. Ver. 17. *Now I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions, &c.* The same might also be observed of what he says to the Corinthians in both Epistles to them. The II^d and III^d Chapters of the Revelations are also upon the Plan of the KEYS, Right and Authority of judging, censuring, &c. being in the Church. And we read of but one (that I remember) in all

the New-Testament that pretended to assume the Pre-eminence, and to use the KEYS, refusing to take into the Church and casting out of the Church; whose Deeds John speaks of as evil and malicious, I Ild Epistle, 9th and 10th Verses. John says, he himself wrote to the Church: but this *Diotrephes* treated Things in a different Manner, and it is no uncommon Thing for *Diotrephan* Bishops to *prate maliciously* against the true Apostles, Ministers or Disciples of Christ, who allow the Church their Rights: Even as that old *Diotrephes* did against *John* and the other Apostles who wrote to the Church. I hope by this Time it sufficiently appears, that the KEYS were by Christ committed to the Church, which are considered as his Body. And therefore for any Man or set of Men, Minister or Councils, to presume to wrest them out of their Hands; i. e. to pretend to impose Members upon any Church; or to take them away as if they could dismiss them; or remove their Relation; or to put on Censures, or to take them off; or to Negative the Church in these Acts; has all the Appearance of the worst of *sacrileges*. What can be worse robbing than to wrest the KEYS of a Treasure from the right Owner? Or consider the Church as his Body, it has all the Symptoms of worse than crucifying Christ afresh. To me the attempting or pretending to impose Members on any Church which they judge unworthy, very much resembles the putting on Christ a Crown of Thorns; or of giving him Gall and Vinegar to drink. The pretending to take away or remove, or Censure Members contrary to the Church; is dislocating or breaking the Members of Christ's Body; which is worse than the crucifiers of Christ did to him; for a Bone of him was not to be broken. And may the Lord forgive all such as have any Hand in such Things, not knowing what they do: But the Soul that doth ought presumptuously, shall be cut off from among his People.

Having thus far shewn that no such *negating Power* is or can belong to the Minister or Presbytery, as is so much claimed or pretended: That the KEYS by Christ were committed to the Church: That the Church cannot be considered as a Legislative Body; I hope it may be seen, that there is no need of all the Noise and Plea that some make about Conscience, and that the Minister can't go contrary to his Conscience in acting his Office-Part, respecting the Votes of the Church. For when it is Matter of Judgment, it cannot be Matter of Conscience. But if the Church are to make Laws

and Statutes ; they might make some contrary to his Conscience, and he no doubt ought to have right to negative them ; or some Way found out, for him to be freed from being subject to the Laws he in no Sense consented to. But as the Case now stands, and the Power and Business of the Church is no other than Executive, or to administer upon Laws already made, there is no need nor possibility of his having a Negative upon the Judgments or Votes of the Church ; nor any Controul or Embarrassments upon his Conscience ; and it is no doubt with me, that it is the entertaining this mistaken Notion, of the Church being or acting as a Legislative Body, which is the Cause of many of the Contentions, and much of the Confusion there is in our Churches.

I had many Things more in my Mind, which I thought to have wrote : But I must leave my Patient with the Host, and pass on my Journey ; when I return, if I find any Thing more to say, I determine to make Disburtsments according to my Ability.

Appendix.

HAVING perused the preceeding Narrative of the late Troubles and Transactions in *Bolton*, before it went to the Press, wrote by a Neighbour unknown; and being well acquainted with all the Circumstances, I hope the Author will not take it amiss, if I rectify one Mistake in said Narrative, and also add a few Lines to set some Things in a clearer Light.

6 AP 64

In said Narrative it is said, that the said Minister declared that "he had never drank to that degree so as in any Way " to affect or hurt his Reason, Speech or Limbs; and the Church " voted to accept of said Declaration as a Settlement of said " Affair," (which Declaration was made and repeated at other Times) but the following Declaration was what the Church settled with him upon at that Time, viz.

" WHEREAS many have manifested an uneasiness with me, respecting supposed Intemperance on the Lord's Day, on which was our last Communion; on which I say, I do not pretend there is no Foundation of Suspicion; but rather think it was mainly and principally owing to some other Cause or Causes. But let it be from what it will I desire to take a suitable Notice of it, and be duly humbled under the Frown of Providence, and engage by divine Help, to shun all reasonable Grounds of Jealousy for the Time to come."

And when it was repeatedly urged that he should make some further Confession, he declared that he could not, nor would not, and that he should do Violence to his own Conscience if he did: till at length, either by the Persuasion of the Council, or some other means, he acknowledges, that conscious of his own faultiness, he freely and frankly confesses his Sin and Faults, in the excessive Use of Spirituous Liquors in several Instances: and humbly asks forgiveness of God and his People, &c. Which last Confession he always refused to read to the Congregation. The first Declaration and the last Confession were so different, that the Church could never reconcile them together; but Mr. *Goff* always insisted upon it, that the first was equal to the last.

JOHN WHETCOMB.

Bolton, Feb. 20, 1773.

To Col. JOHN WHETCOMB, and Capt.
ASA WHETCOMB.

Gentlemen,

I Herewith send you a small TREATISE on Church-Government, which I doubt not you will peruse, knowing you both to be Friends to LIBERTY, both Civil and Religious, and also Sufferers under the *growing Power of the Clergy.*

You have liberty to print it if you think proper. It comes to you from an Inhabitant of Boston, a Friend to true Gospel Churches, and

Your unknown Servant,

Boston, Feb. 16, 1773.

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B O S T O N.

A VINDICATION of the Government of the *New-England Churches*: Drawn from Antiquity; the Light of Nature; Holy Scripture; Its Noble Nature; and from the Dignity Divine Providence has put upon it.—Also,—The Churches Quarrel Espoused: Or, a Satyri- cal Reply, to certain Proposals made, in Answer to this Question,—What further Steps are to be taken, that the Councils may have due Constitution and Efficacy in Sup- porting, Preserving, and Well-Ordering the Interest of the Churches in the Country. By JOHN WISE, Late Pastor to a Church in *Ipswich*. To which is added,—A Platform of CHURCH DISCIPLINE: Gathered out of the Word of God, and agreed upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches assembled at *Cambridge*, 1648. And,—A Confession of Faith, owned and consented unto by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches assembled at *Boston, New-England*, May 12, 1680. To which is also added,—An Extract from a Book intituled, *New-England's Lamentati- ons*, wrote by the Reverend Mr. JOHN WHITE, late Pas- tor of the first Church in *Gloucester*; to which is subjoined a Letter by another Hand, shewing Reasons for adhering to our Platform as a Rule of Church-Government; and Ob- jections against Ruling Elders answered.

[This Work is so highly approved of by Mankind in general, (and especially by those who are allowed to be the best Judges) that it has gone through two Editions in about six Months; and as many Persons were disappointed of a Copy in the former Edition, 'tis hoped they will not be backward in furnishing themselves therewith in the present. The Publisher having his own Interest, as well as that of the Congregational Churches, so much at Heart, that he will Endeavour to the utmost, that said Books may be spread uni- versally; and would be much obliged to his Friends in the Country for any Pieces of a like Nature.]